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RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 8153
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 1394
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFIUU/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAHND/CDRJTFB SOTO CANO HO
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: Drug Trafficking Activity Before and After the
Ouster of President Zelaya.

REF: Tegucigalpa 249

¶1. (SBU) Summary: After a series of successful seizure operations in the first half of 2009, the political crisis in Honduras, triggered by the ouster of President Jose Manuel Zelaya on June 28, is already showing its effects by degrading the ability of the Honduran National Police to engage in counternarcotics operations. From January - July 2009, cocaine seizures exceeded 9,700 kilos, either in air and maritime events in Honduran territory or on Honduran flagged maritime vessels, achieving record proportions in contrast to the year-end total seizures of 6,764 kilos of cocaine for all of ¶2008. The success accomplished in the first half of 2009 can be primarily attributed to the enhanced cooperation and coordination between U.S. law enforcement and intelligence entities (DEA, TAT, and JIATF-South) and the Honduran security forces responding to narcotics air and maritime shipments. This joint effort has been suspended since the expulsion of President Zelaya. The Tactical Analysis Team (TAT) has documented the flow of cocaine since June 28, 2009 and found that compared to the same time period in 2008 (June 27-July 25), the number of known narcotics trafficking cases in the JIATF-South system almost doubled from 18 in 2008 to 33 in ¶2009. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Air Cases: There has been a significant increase in the number of air cases related to narcotics trafficking that have come to the country in 2009. From January 27 - June 27, 2009, the Joint Information Communication Center (JICC) registered 21 narcotics flights from Venezuela out of a total of 24, nearly matching the number of cases recorded by JIATF-South and the TAT in the entire calendar year 2008. As of July 25, there have been 30 Honduran air cases or events in 2009. Of particular note are seven air cases and events which have delivered several tons of narcotics to Honduras since June 28, 2009. The month of June 2009 was particularly busy for Honduras-bound air tracks. Of the 11 noted Central American tracks, at least seven landed or made deliveries to Honduras. As of July 29 2009, activity with regard to Honduras has increased significantly. While flights in July 2008 tended toward Guatemala (at least four of eight), almost all flights in July 2009 flew to Honduras. Consistent with the pattern throughout 2009, the majority of Honduras-bound air tracks tended toward the sparsely populated and loosely governed eastern department of Gracias a Dios, in the region known as La Mosquitia. The limited law enforcement presence, the lack of infrastructure (this department has no road access from

outside), and the low level of legitimate economic activity, make this region a main target for narcotics trafficking.

¶3. (SBU) Maritime Cases: Maritime cases have also increased in 2009.

In the period from June 28 to July 24 2009, there were 32 maritime narcotics cases which involved Honduras as the primary delivery destination. For the same period in 2008, there were 16 maritime cases. This jump in the number of maritime cases has no apparent connection with the ouster of President Zelaya, but indicates that drug trafficking continues unabated.

¶4. (SBU) Political Aspects: Since the ouster of President Zelaya on June 28 2009, the de facto regime has claimed to have stopped all narcotics flights from Venezuela and to have made significant inroads against narcotics traffickers, with the insinuation (with no evidence presented to back the claim) that ousted President Zelaya was either complicit or at least tolerant of such activity.

Information available to TAT indicates that this claim is patently false. Narco-activity has remained constant and may have increased since the departure of President Zelaya and the suspension of contact between U.S. counterdrug entities and Honduran security forces. Police contacts at JICC have admitted to Embassy personnel that President Zelaya's physical presence (or non presence) in the country is not linked to the drug trafficking activity, and that undoubtedly the lack of USG support in counternarcotics efforts will bring an increase in this activity. According to JICC, during the month of July narco-trafficking activity may have decreased due to a curfew declared throughout the country. Embassy contacts have also reported to Emboffs indirectly that Honduras Drug czar, General Walter Lopez Reyes (Lopez is Zelaya's appointed chief and has remained in his position after June 28) has expressed concern that

the current political crisis places Honduras at great risk of falling deeper into the tentacles of narco-traffickers.

¶9. (SBU) Comment: Narcotics traffickers are taking advantage of the political crisis in Honduras. The lack of resources of the Honduran law enforcement entities, with attention now focused more on internal security matters related to political events related to June 28, and the suspension of U.S assistance are factors being used by narcotics traffickers to increase the flow and transshipment of drugs. End comment.

Llorens